

**Opening Statement of the Chairman Greg Walden
Subcommittee on Energy Hearing on
“Powering America: Technology’s Role in Empowering Consumers”
September 26, 2017**

(As prepared for delivery)

We continue our “Powering America” hearing series today with a closer look at how new energy technologies are benefiting and empowering electricity consumers.

While the committee continues its review of wholesale power markets and ensuring reliability and affordability, this hearing is intended to examine the ways in which the traditional model of delivering electricity through a centralized system and one-way power flows is being disrupted by an increasingly decentralized system with power being generated and managed by a growing number of new distributed technologies located at the edge of the grid.

You don’t have to look far to see examples of how innovation is transforming the way electricity is being generated, delivered, and consumed, and how consumers are interacting with the grid. For example, in my district, Oregon Tech uses geothermal power to operate its entire campus and sells excess energy back to the grid. I visited Oregon Tech’s one-of-a-kind geothermal plant in August, and saw firsthand how they are taking advantage of this great renewable resource in the Klamath Basin.

Today's hearing also allows us to examine how advanced electricity technologies are not only transforming the way the grid operates but also how these technologies are empowering consumers. Today's consumers, both large and small, increasingly expect more from their energy infrastructure systems and the rigid regulatory structures of the past. Modern consumers want an electricity system that is nimble enough to accommodate new technologies and provide consumers with greater control over how they purchase and manage their electricity needs.

Advanced technologies are allowing consumers to express their preferences in electric generation and consumption; to make purchasing decisions based on affordability, control, time of use, and the generation source or location of their electricity. And this consumer behavior is having an effect on electricity prices, choice, the environment, and grid resiliency and reliability.

In many instances, advanced energy technologies are being deployed behind-the-meter at consumers' homes or businesses. However, even though these technologies are physically located on the distribution system, we are seeing more and more instances where distributed energy technologies are beginning to have impacts on the bulk power system and the wholesale electricity markets. These technologies raise questions on what role, if any, federal regulators and regional grid operators should play in relation to distributed energy technologies; an issue that this committee will continue to explore.

Joining us in this hearing, we have witnesses representing a range of energy technologies along with witnesses from utilities who are successfully attempting to implement and accommodate new types of grid technologies. I would like to welcome these witnesses and thank them for contributing their expertise to this hearing. I am confident that this hearing will help us better understand the role that technologies such as distributed generation, microgrids, demand response, and battery storage play in a 21st century electricity system. Furthermore, today's hearing will also shed light on the challenges that are preventing advanced technologies from deploying in more areas around the country and at faster rates.

The U.S. electricity sector is one of the most regulated sectors in the American economy, evidenced by the numerous oversight entities positioned at both the state and the federal level. This regulatory structure has been crafted for good reason and remains critical in ensuring that all Americans have access to affordable and reliable electricity. However, when it comes to advanced energy technologies, we must make sure that the country's regulatory structure and policies continue to be updated and modernized so they do not stand as barriers to innovation.